

Inspection report for Lemington Children's Centre

Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	362516
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Joanna Sharpe

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Fiona James
Date of previous inspection	NA
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Linked school if applicable	NA
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY299757 Lemington Centre Playgroup EY 295684 Places for Children Nursery Day care provider

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, children centre staff, local authority representatives, members from key linked agencies, a headteacher from the local primary school, commissioned partner providers, members of the community centre management committee and a number of users, including children. They observed a number of sessions/activities, including those at other designated centres within the area cluster. They considered a wide range of evaluation materials and data analysis and a range of relevant documentation such as policies, risk assessments and safeguarding details.

Information about the centre

Sure Start Lemington Children's Centre is based within a volunteer-led Healthy Living Centre in the Outer West of Newcastle. The Lemington Community Association manages the building. Linked childcare comprises 'Places for Children' Day Care Nursery, Lemington Centre Playgroup, childminders and local schools. The new centre was completed in 2005 with the children's centre element being fully operational from March 2006. It is a phase 1 children's centre which offers a wide range of services.

The centre serves a disadvantaged reach area of the city, with pockets of severe deprivation. The majority of families are White British. The population profile of 10,574 (575 children under 5 years) shows a relatively even distribution across all age bands. Based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Lemington is the 15th most deprived ward in Newcastle out of 26 and it is relatively more disadvantaged, based on the health deprivation and disability theme. 15.1% of families in Lemington receive out-of-work benefits with 140 children, aged 0 to 4 years, dependant on workless benefits. Males within the 25 to 49 age range claiming benefits are the highest claimant group within the Lemington area. Overall, children enter the centre with skills below those expected for their age.

Governance is by the local authority. HealthWORKS Newcastle manages the day-to-day Sure Start Children's Centre, commissioned by Newcastle City Council on behalf of the Sure Start Outer West children's centre.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

1

Main findings

Lemington centre provides outstanding provision for its users, some of whom report that it has enabled them to make positive life changes. It capitalises on the situation it finds itself in the community centre, utilising links to the benefit of its users. It also very effectively utilises the support gained by partnerships with other agencies and other local children centres.

Managers have a clear vision for high quality provision and outcomes. The centre excels in the care and guidance it offers its users, making this guidance personalised to meet individual needs. Staff know the families with whom they work exceptionally well, which enable them to accurately identify needs. The centre staff have provided excellent support for mothers with post-natal depression and for those who have suffered domestic violence. Its integrated work with other agencies is outstanding, ensuring that the specific needs of the centre users are very well met, as a result of high quality services that produce excellent outcomes.

Very close community cohesion is evident, with many examples of users making new friends and relationships being forged. Relationships in the centre are excellent, with a diverse range of groups of different ages and abilities mixing extremely well together and with mutual respect. Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust and effective, and are enhanced by up-to-date training and the very strong links with other services to develop parents' and carers' knowledge.

Evaluation is exceptionally perceptive and very accurate. All services are carefully monitored, with feedback being requested and fastidiously analysed. The centre has a detailed knowledge, through consultation, of how all users and other agencies are

involved in the governance of the centre and how its work has impacted on services and outcomes. Detailed monitoring and assessment is completed and progress in this area has been dramatic in the last two years. In the last six months, progress has been made to ensure that data are used even more effectively to focus on the needs of Lemington.

Children, parents and carers make excellent progress by accessing services and training offered. Children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved. The achievement gap between children in Lemington and children in Newcastle overall is rapidly narrowing. There are numerous examples of very relevant training improving the ability of users to seek employment and to improve their personal skills.

All staff have a vision of excellence and work continually, enthusiastically and very successfully to ensure the highest quality provision and outcomes. Together with the high quality of leadership and management, this indicates that the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

There are no areas that need improvement that the centre has not already identified in its own development plan.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Adult users report significant gains in their physical, mental and emotional health, and educationally, as a result of the numerous activities, for example, cookery classes and advice on oral hygiene advice in toddler sessions. They say that the sessions, such as Ready Teddy Go and Pushy Mothers, also promote a keen awareness of what represents a healthy lifestyle and report that these sessions were excellent and a fun way to exercise with the children. In sessions observed, parents and carers were having great fun alongside their children. Children enthusiastically take fruit home and understand the benefits of drinking water. As mothers state, classes to encourage and support breastfeeding and the Freedom Programme have led to, 'life changing support for me and the bairns'. Mothers comment that without the support of the children's centre they would not have continued to breastfeed their babies. Emergency admissions in Lemington are among the lowest in Newcastle. Levels of obesity in Lemington are low in comparison to levels in Newcastle.

Numerous examples were evident of parents and carers developing economic stability and independence following the intervention of quality training provided by

the children's centre. The take-up rate for training is excellent. Breastfeeding support training led to one user becoming employed as the 'city-wide coordinator for breastfeeding' and another becoming a trained volunteer support worker. Volunteers have undertaken National Vocational Qualification in childcare, training in first-aid, safeguarding and skills for life, which has led to a change in their attitudes to learning and to higher personal aspirations. This has given users the confidence to seek employment when they are in a position to do so. Disaffected young parents are encouraged to take part in training at the centre and Future Options Courses promote learning for teenage mums. Young fathers have been able to continue training at the centre as they have been given the facility to feed their baby during training sessions. Advice about handling debts and accessing benefits has enabled families to become economically more stable. Links with Newcastle Futures and Jobcentre Plus are good and frequent, with an abundance of guidance and support from centre staff which ensure that users are directed to the appropriate services. This help has enabled some parents and carers to become more financially secure.

Users feel very safe. The centre has an open-door policy, which welcomes all. Users typically state that 'everybody is welcome' and 'I was immediately made to feel welcome'. The children's centre manager personally visited the local barracks, to encourage parents and carers there to join activities at the centre. These parents and carers commented that they felt far less isolated as a result. Staff are exceedingly vigilant, contributing to the centre being a very safe environment.

The conduct of children, who have previously found it difficult to conform to the centres high expectations of behaviour, has improved considerably as a result of training for parents and carers, such as the Incredible Years Programme. The centre demonstrates excellent support and positive outcomes for families and children on child protection plans.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	1

How good is the provision?

1

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children and parents is excellent. The outstanding use of these assessments is evidenced in the decreasing numbers of children who require extra support to address their varying needs. Analysis of evaluations and data is exceptional. Children's centre staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of individual users. In raising users' aspirations the centre has enabled users to progress educationally and emotionally. Breastfeeding mums comment that they 'would have given up without support from the children's centre'.

Safeguarding procedures are robust with monitoring of requirements and training being carefully monitored. Many additional examples of steps being taken to keep children safe can be evidenced; information has been given out, a safety week and work with the Child Accident Prevention Forum. The soft play area is deep cleaned every two weeks to protect children. Many parents and carers are much more aware of basic first-aid and of safeguarding procedures as a result of effective training and the distribution of such items as safety packs with carbon monitors, and first-aid kits. Excellent, permanently available outdoor play, gym and nurse facilities promote healthy lifestyles and offer immediate support when required. Facilities include sensory areas, both inside and outside.

Activities are of a high quality and well attended. The children's centre staff go to great lengths to ensure all users can access the wide range of services. The installation of automatic doors and a lift allows easy access. Transport is made available to enable users to utilise activities and resources at other centres. Crèche facilities are made available for all those who require it. Children with disabilities access all services and activities are specifically adapted to meet their needs. Family services and outreach workers have delivered training in the home to maintain contact with some users who have become disengaged. This has then encouraged them to return to the centre.

Activities are held at weekends, evenings and school holidays, so that contact and services are maintained and many extra, diverse activities arranged at these times to meet the differing needs of the users. Regular events such as 'Dads Day' focus on the needs of fathers. Extra sessions for Newcastle Futures and a Pathways to Work Advisor and an increase in the number of volunteers have been organised to support the needs of fathers in particular. Teenage parents who have rejected schooling access training at the centre so that they can continue with their education.

The quality of the care, guidance and support is exceptional. It is personalised and well coordinated to meet the individual needs of users. The sensitivity, enthusiasm and well-coordinated approach of staff enables the support to be of an extremely high quality. Personal quotes, for example, 'Without their help I was worried where my life would be, I was on the road down' demonstrate the quality of the guidance to influence outstanding outcomes for users. There are examples of the centre helping to break the cycle of domestic violence in families.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	1
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Senior staff are highly motivated, exceptionally passionate about the work they do and have very high expectations of themselves and others. This passion is shared with all staff, resulting in high morale. Managers work very closely and successfully with other integrated services to provide excellent day-to-day provision. Communication between all staff and relevant partners is excellent and has a very positive impact on families in the community. The management systems are clear to those involved and day-to-day management responsibilities are very well understood.

All safeguarding arrangements are extremely robust with careful administration ensuring that Criminal Record Bureau checks and training are regularly updated. Staff's excellent knowledge of first-aid and safeguarding and accident prevention, ensures the safety of children at all times. Inter-agency work enables leaders to deal very effectively with the consequences of domestic violence or child protection issues.

Governance is outstanding, with the local authority ensuring that all managers are fully accountable for the performance of the centre and the effectiveness of its partnerships. The children centre manager liaises with all partners to provide excellent and effective use of the accommodation. The children's centre manager is keenly aware of the need for sustainability and works with different partnerships and projects to maintain services and gain extra funding.

Inclusion is at the heart of the centre's work and diversity is warmly embraced. Users of all ages, abilities, disabilities, age and gender, show mutual respect, understanding and friendship. Data show that around 67% of users are from the most disadvantaged areas. Every effort is made to ensure that all users can access the centre easily.

Partnership work is excellent and enables the children's centre to provide high quality and fully integrated services. All agencies support each other purposefully and enthusiastically and good relationships enable leaders to provide services that are very effective. All users contribute to decision making and to the further development of services. Home visits, parents' and carers' forums and agency representation at meetings allow the views of all to shape the range of provision. Leaders' realistic targets are based on ongoing detailed analysis of a wide range of information to ensure that the centre provides excellent services for its users and outstanding value for money.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	1

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Lemington Children's Centre on Tuesday 9 and Wednesday 10 November 2010. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We found the centre to be a busy, warm welcoming environment where everybody is made to feel welcome. We are very grateful for your enthusiasm and honesty when sharing your experiences with us. Your feedback to us formed an important part of the inspection. We found that the centre fully included all people, regardless of age, gender, disabilities or culture, in its welcoming environment. Mutual respect was evident among you all.

The children's centre staff are totally committed to serving you in the best way that they can. They work enthusiastically and set high standards for themselves in order to pursue excellence in everything that they do to support you. Along with the management staff, they are dedicated to making sure the centre provides you with outstanding services that promote excellent outcomes.

We found that the centre cares very much about your well-being and provides you with outstanding care and support. The centre makes a great deal of effort to try to get all of you to use the services and they go to great lengths to make sure your views shape the services they offer. Their work has culminated in documents such as the 'You Said, We Did'.

The centre also looks very carefully at data they gain from other sources to find out the needs of the community it serves, such as the achievements of your children in their early years at school and the levels of obesity in young children in your area. The evidence they receive is taken very effectively into account when arranging activities and liaising with agencies, to ensure that the needs of all are met and that resources, both financial and accommodation, are used efficiently. The centre works exceptionally well with a number of different agencies to coordinate services and

support, to provide you with the very focused care and guidance that fully meets your needs.

Family support and outreach workers provide you with services in your homes when you are unable to access them at the centre. Many of you spoke to us about how their intervention has directed you to a valuable source of support, such as help with benefits or debt problems. You told us of how the centre staff have given you help in accessing services which are available at other centres, by either making you aware of them or helping with transport to get you there. Many of you told us how the work of the centre has helped you to achieve educationally and to enhance your own personal and social development. We heard of many examples where programmes, such as the Freedom Programme and breastfeeding support, have changed lives. Many of you recognise that the support the centre has given you has helped during some difficult periods of your life. Your comments were extremely useful and contributed significantly to the judgement that the centre gives you an outstanding service.

Over the past two years, the children's centre staff have worked very diligently and successfully to gain information about the community around the centre in order to even more closely tailor the services they give you to meet your needs. The progress has been excellent and rapid.

We found that Lemington Children's Centre serves the needs of Lemington exceedingly well and ensures outstanding outcomes for all users. Once again, thank you for all your comments and help. We wish you well for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.